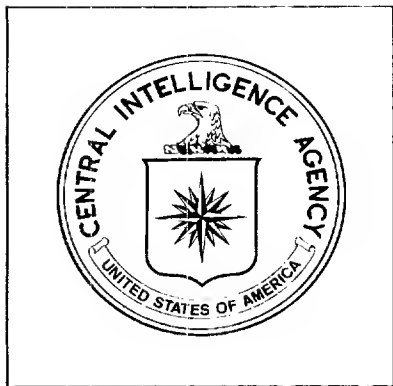


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MIDDLE EAST - AFRICA - SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Nigeria

Guidelines Given Constitutional Drafting Committee

The recently appointed constitutional drafting committee held its inaugural session on October 18 and received some general guidelines from Head of State Brigadier Murtala Muhammed, who recently announced a plan to restore Nigeria to civilian rule by 1979. In an address to the committee, Muhammed outlined the regime's concerns and stated its preferences as to the sort of document that should be drawn up. In general, Muhammed admonished the drafters to reflect on Nigeria's first unsatisfactory experience with civilian rule between independence in 1960 and the first military coup in 1966 and aim for a constitution that would better ensure "orderly development" and avoid "cut-throat political competition" among Nigeria's various tribes.

Muhammed said that the constitution should provide for:

- a federal structure of government with an elected president and vice president and an independent judiciary;
- public accountability of government officials and safeguards against overconcentration of power in a few hands;
- a permanent corrupt practices tribunal and public complaints bureau;
- restrictions on the number of states that could be created by a future regime.

Muhammed said that the ruling Supreme Military Council had decided that provision could be made for a limited number of "genuine and truly national" political parties. At the same time, however, the Nigerian leader betrayed a deep suspicion of the

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country's former politicians and denounced their previous abuse of the electoral process. He seemed to be advocating a system of rule by consensus as preferable to one based on formal parties and institutionalized opposition. He, in fact, sent up a trial balloon for a "no-party" system by remarking that the Supreme Military Council was "of the opinion that if the committee could discover some means by which a government could be formed without the involvement of political parties, it would be a welcome idea."

The committee will surely have a difficult time trying to comply with the regime's vague guidelines especially given the group's unwieldy size--it has 50 members--and the diversity of views reflected within it. The chairman and other knowledgeable Nigerians reportedly are dubious that a satisfactory constitution can be drafted. The chairman is said to be especially discouraged by the refusal of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a prominent Yoruba leader, to serve on the committee.

Among politically aware Nigerians, there already is a simmering controversy about the representatives of the committee, which is loaded with many old ex-politicians and other civilian critics of continued military rule. Muhammed insisted the committee reflected a cross-section of opinion, but such groups as women, trade unions, and traditional rulers were left out and are still clamoring for a voice. By including so many former politicians, the regime appears to be trying to guard itself against future criticism from these old warhorses should the committee prove unable to draft a constitution that suits the military government.

Muhammed tried to head off further controversy by advising the committee not to write any ideological prescriptions into the constitution concerning the sort of social and economic system Nigeria ought to have.

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The committee includes several old ideologues of a socialist bent and a number of younger economic nationalists, and many Nigerians are concerned that this group may be tempted to work some unacceptable political and economic philosophy into the constitution.
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Ghana

Favorable Reaction To Government Restructuring

The Ghanaian armed forces reportedly have reacted favorably to junta leader Colonel Acheampong's restructuring of the military government in early October. Acheampong decreed the change to counter dissatisfaction in the officer corps by giving the armed forces a more active and direct role in governing the country. The simultaneous dismissal from the government of several of Acheampong's unpopular cronies has also been applauded by the military.

The emphasis within the new Supreme Military Council, the top governing body, is on a more collegial style of rule with all seven members sharing executive responsibilities. Acheampong thus appears to have lost some personal power, although he is still at least primus inter pares.

The new ruling body is not as totally representative as the group it superseded. Four of the council's members come from one small Akan tribe in southeastern Ghana. Colonel Acheampong is an Ashanti, the largest and historically most important of the Akan-speaking tribes. This imbalance could become a source of dissatisfaction within the armed forces should the council display any sign of tribal favoritism in its decisions.

Three officers who collaborated with Acheampong in the 1972 coup that brought the regime to power, have resigned in protest from the new government rather than accept significantly downgraded positions. All three officers had been increasingly at odds with Acheampong in recent months. One of them has threatened to arrange the assassination of Chief of the Defense Staff General Okai whom he blames for pressuring Acheampong into making the changes.

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The council has given the important ministerial post of economic planning to Robert Gardiner, one of Ghana's most distinguished and competent civil servants. The 61-year old Gardiner was the executive secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa for many years. Besides Gardiner, there is only one other civilian in Ghana's new 18-man cabinet. Gardiner faces difficult challenges ahead, for the regime clearly is looking to him to help it come to grips more effectively with Ghana's pressing economic problems. (SECRET/NOFORN/NOCONTRACT/ORCON)

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